DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 375 SP 037 268

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TITLE Leading the Way: A College of Education and Health Sciences' Role in Higher Education Reform.
PUB DATE Feb 97
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (49th, Phoenix, AZ, February 26-March 1, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Deans; Committees; Educational Change; *Educational Cooperation; Educational Quality; Higher Education; Leadership; *Schools of Education; Self Evaluation (Groups); Strategic Planning; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Bradley University IL; *Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This document provides an example of how colleges and schools of education can lead by example through their active participation in campus-based change initiatives. The paper describes the roles which a Dean and an Associate Dean of a College of Education and Health Sciences played in university-wide strategic planning and reform efforts. Two strategic planning initiatives are highlighted, as well as one component of the North Central Accreditation process. These include the areas of curricular excellence, quality and work innovation, and assessment of student academic achievement. Finally, three principles that can guide colleges and schools of education in their efforts to lead by example through their active participation in campus-based change initiatives are suggested. These are: (1) leverage your strengths; (2) where two or more are gathered, there is politics; and (3) never promise without a plan. Four charts suitable for making overhead projection transparencies are attached. (ND)

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ED 406 375

# LEADING THE WAY:
# A COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH SCIENCES' ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM

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Prepared for:

49th American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Annual Meeting

February 26 - March 1, 1997

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## PURPOSE

This paper describes the roles which a Dean and an Associate Dean of a College of Education and Health Sciences play in university-wide strategic planning and reform efforts. The purpose of this brief description is to provide an example of how colleges and schools of education can lead by example through their active participation in campus-based change initiatives. Two strategic planning initiatives are highlighted, as well as one component of the North Central Accreditation process. These include the areas of curricular excellence, quality and work innovation, and assessment of student academic achievement.

## DESCRIPTIONS OF THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

### Curricular Excellence

Inherent within the mission of the university profiled in this presentation is the commitment to prepare students for career success, inspire them to work to improve society, and value and engage in life-long learning. As society and the world of work change, so must the ways in which students are educated. The teaching and learning process must take on new forms, with particular attention paid to interdisciplinary teaching, curriculum connections, performance assessment, and outcome measures. The faculty, who own the curriculum, must assume the responsibility of: assessing the current condition, identifying needs, making revisions, and implementing new curricular initiatives.

The university's Task Force on Curricular Excellence is charged with the responsibility of facilitating a process whereby colleges and academic departments examine their curricula for the purpose of recommending new programs and/or changes in college or university structures and procedures. These recommendations are then reported to the Curricular Excellence Task Force for its consideration. In addition, the University Curriculum and Regulations Committee reviews the policies and procedures that facilitate, or create barriers to, curricular innovation and excellence and make their own recommendations. The Task Force on Curricular Excellence then must compile the data it collects, synthesize the recommendations it receives, and report its findings to the University Strategic Planning Committee.

The Dean of the College of Education and Health Sciences chairs the university's Task Force on Curricular Excellence, as well as the college's Strategic Planning Committee. The Associate Dean serves on the latter committee and assists in the process of developing and compiling college recommendations for curricular innovation. In addition, one of the college's department chairs leads the University Quality of Life Committee.

### Quality and Work Innovation

The Associate Dean serves on two subcommittees of the University Strategic Planning Committee. One of the subcommittees focuses on work innovation and is charged with developing a plan for enhancing productivity throughout the university. The other subcommittee focuses on assessment of the university work environment. Particularly in regard to this second subcommittee, the Associate Dean has had the opportunity to significantly impact the decision making process. This is due in part to the small size of the subcommittee (four members), but also to the fact that the study of organizational

environments and their effects on the productivity of people working within those environments has been a part of her research agenda. In fact, the subcommittee implemented her recommendation to use KEYS (Amabile, Burnside, & Gryskiewicz, 1995), an instrument designed to assess the degree to which work environments inhibit or facilitate the creative production of their employees.

**Assessment of Student Academic Achievement**

The Associate Dean also served on the University Assessment Committee. This group was charged with the task of planning and coordinating the assessment of student academic achievement. Although this work relates more closely to the North Central Accreditation process than to strategic planning, it still provides another opportunity for the College of Education and Health Sciences to "lead the way." For example, the college's departments already have well-established plans for assessing program outcomes, in many cases due to specific accreditation standards (e.g., NCATE, NLN, AANA, ADAA, CACREP, CAPTE) and/or state approvals and certifications. Consequently, while other colleges find they have much left undone in regard to assessing student academic achievement and program outcomes, the College of Education and Health Sciences is in a position to refine its assessment procedures.

The college's leadership is demonstrated in a variety of additional ways. Department assessment plans are used as examples for other colleges to follow, and department chairs from the College of Education and Health Sciences are asked to share their assessment expertise and procedures at workshops designed for the university's department chairs. As other colleges are just beginning to discover the potential of performance-based assessment strategies, such as portfolios, many faculty members in the College of Education and Health Sciences have used these techniques for several years.

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE REFORM EFFORTS

Three primary principles can guide colleges and schools of education in their efforts to lead by example through their active participation in campus-based change initiatives. Each of these three principles is briefly described and illustrated.

**Leverage Your Strengths**

This point is so obvious that it tends to be overlooked. However, when colleges and schools of education succumb to the temptation to focus on what they do not have, they may neglect to conduct an inventory of what they do have and what they do well. For example, twelve years ago Bradley's College of Education and College of Health Sciences were merged as the result of a strategic planning recommendation. Although at the time the two colleges' faculties and administrations did not welcome the change with open arms, the newly formed College of Education and Health Sciences eventually analyzed its assets and discovered that all of its departments shared the variable of preparing human service professionals. As a result of discovering that commonality, the college has since learned to leverage it as a strength by developing a comprehensive, integrated services model which utilizes the expertise of all of its departments (Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Human Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, Nursing, and Physical Therapy) to address the needs of the whole child.
An additional strength which colleges or schools of education can bring to campus-based change initiatives is their knowledge of, and expertise in, the areas of curriculum development and review, assessment, collaboration, and the change process.

**Where Two or More Are Gathered, There Are Politics.**

Speaking of the change process, when confronted with the possibility of change, an individual's first response typically is, "How will it affect me?" Colleges and schools of education that succeed in combining what they know about the developmental nature of the change process with a realization of the role that campus politics play in the change process are more likely to succeed in their efforts to impact reform initiatives. They do so by striking a balance between being obsessed with politics and ignoring politics. They also acknowledge the value of listening critically and with the intention of understanding the "other side's" point of view.

Finally, the politically astute understand that change is less painful when it is something they are doing, rather than something that is being done to them. For example, rather than attempting to hide under the table when the provost asks who would like to chair the Curricular Innovation Committee, a dean who possesses both expertise and experience with the curricular change process and recognizes that her college may have something to gain from her chairing the committee voluntarily accepts that "honor."

**"Never a Promise Without a Plan"** (Ziglar, p. 88)

Sometimes in the name of higher education reform people and colleges labor diligently at their tasks, but end up somewhere other than their intended destinations. A university's strategic planning and strategic budgeting should be led by, and reflect, the visions, core values, and mission statements of the organization. However, when mission and vision statements serve only as platitudes which adorn plaques or as catch phrases which embellish motivational speeches, they fail to translate into tangible change. Colleges and schools of education that succeed in their efforts to create purposeful change do so by identifying and clearly articulating shared missions and visions and then developing road maps to reach agreed upon goals. As Campbell warns, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else" (1974, p. 1).

## CONCLUSION

The "I'm just a teacher educator." mentality has no place in higher education, just as the "I'm just a teacher." mentality has no place in P-12 education. Colleges and schools of education, their administrators, and their faculties have much to contribute to university-wide reform efforts. Empowered by: knowledge of teaching and learning strategies, understanding of the developmental and highly personal nature of the change process, the realization that "where two or more are gathered" there is politics, and the importance of maintaining a strong and clearly articulated vision, they can position themselves to effect significant and lasting reform in institutions of higher education.

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# ORGANIZATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AT BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

*Committees and Task Forces in which faculty within education took leadership roles





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# Strategic Planning: An on-going Developmental and Change Process

Institutional Vision

Economic and Social Forces

University Learning Environment

# OUTCOMES OF UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANNING

- New mission, vision, and core commitment statements
- New goals and initiatives developed
- New action plans for implementation
- New strategic budgeting and resource planning

# Principles to guide reform efforts

- Leverage your strengths
- Seek to understand university "politics" and use it to your advantage
- Always plan and implement with your mission and vision in mind
- Communicate---communicate----------
  ----------communicate----------